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The Gopher Snake as a Despoiler of Quails' Nests.

The question of what part the common spotted gopher-snake plays in the economy of nature has arisen frequently in my mind, and until recently I had accepted the prevalent opinion that he was "harmless." The following four observations, however, have convinced me that he is a bad citizen. The Valley Partridge is a very common bird on the Stanford ranch, due to the protection from hunters the year round. I have often heard the old birds during breeding time giving the alarm notes for several minutes. They were generally perched in the trees and I ascribed their fear to my approach.

May 29.—I came upon a pair of partridges in a low tree giving notes of great alarm. I thought at first that a flock of newly hatched chicks might be near and commenced to look for them. Pulling aside the branches of a low shrub, there was disclosed a nest of eight eggs and a large gopher snake with four knots in his body, which, when pressed, flattened out. I watched him a moment and he swallowed an egg. I killed him and ripped him open. Inside were four eggs unbroken and material for at least two more.

May 31.—Another pair of excited birds attracted my attention and after an hour's search I found another nest of twelve eggs and another snake with one lump in his body. I killed him instantly.

June 5.—Still another excited partridge household and the same cause discovered after search. This time I tried dragging the robber away, to ascertain how anxious he was to continue his meal. He would return after being taken away ten paces. I killed him and cut him open. He had swallowed at least one egg which was well along in incubation.

June 22.—This time a flutter and a struggle in the shrubbery attracted my attention. It was the female trying to drive the snake away. Being in a hurry I carried the snake about fifty yards down the path and put him down. He started off in the direction of the nest and when I returned an hour later he was gulping down an egg. There was a lump in him well down toward the end of the abdomen, and I regretted after having killed him that I did not bring him home and see if he was able to digest an egg with the shell on.

THEODORE J. HOOVER.

Stanford University, June 22, '99

Taking of a Condor's Egg.

On April 17, 1899, an egg of the California Condor was taken in San Roque canon, near Santa Barbara, by F. Ruiz, a surveyor in the employ of the Pacific Improvement Co., who, with a party, was doing some work in the canon. His attention was first attracted by seeing a pair of the birds flying about the canon, and it occurred to him that there might possibly be a nest in the vicinity. Acting on this supposition he and a companion named Forbush proceeded up the canon, and finally noticed a cave on a high cliff some 150 feet above the creek, which they managed to reach after considerable difficulty. From the top Ruiz was enabled to look over the edge a short distance into the cave, where he saw the egg on the floor of the cave, with one of the birds crouched on the ground beside the nest, which consisted of a few sticks of brush and some sand which had evidently blown into the cave from the edge of the cliff.

Mr. Ruiz states that the bird remained in this position until he had thrown several rocks at it, one of which either hit the bird or came close enough to make it take flight when it proceeded down the canon. At considerable risk, Ruiz then clambered down into the cave without the aid of a rope or other assistance, save what the brush afforded, his companion remaining on the cliff to give him warning in event of any hostility on the part of the disturbed condor. While securing the egg he was told that the bird was returning and as he was retreating up the cliff with the prize he noticed both birds on the wing, and to use his own words, "fighting and quarreling in the air." They did not attempt any attack, but followed the men about for a considerable time before taking leave. The egg was perfectly fresh and measured 4 3-10 x 2 6-10 inches and was a trifle deeper in color than those I have seen illustrated. A young condor (a "yearling," I suppose) was shot in the same canon about two months ago.

A. P. REDINGTON.

Santa Barbara, Cal., May 2, '99.



JOHN M. WELCH, Henry W. Carriger and C. Barlow spent a week in the Sierras of El Dorado Co., Cal., early in June and had a most enjoyable outing. Numerous photographs were taken and Mr. Carriger carried away the only set of Hermit Warbler reported for the season.